

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

OCTOBER 28, 2008

In June of this year my office received a complaint from a voter who said that her voter registration had been changed from Democratic to Republican without her knowledge or consent. We referred this complaint to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk who investigated the situation and determined that indeed this voter had not willingly changed her party affiliation and that voter fraud may have taken place.

The registration affidavit purportedly submitted by this voter to change her party was issued to a political organization called Young Political Majors (YPM) which has conducted voter registration activities throughout the state of California. YPM has recently come under investigation in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties concerning allegations of the same sort of fraudulent activity. This week the owner of YPM, Mark Jacoby, was arrested in Ontario on suspicion of fraudulently registering himself to vote in California.

The activity which YPM is accused of doing is known as "slamming." Typically, a voter will be approached to sign a petition concerning some issue of importance. After signing the "petition" with name and address the voter will be asked to sign a secondary document. Unbeknownst to the voter, this secondary document is a voter registration affidavit which has been or will be filled out so as to change the voter's party affiliation.

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This will not be a problem in the November, 2008 General Election because all voters will vote the same ballot. However, it will certainly be a problem in the next primary election and also in between elections as parties seek to communicate with their voters and to assess their relative strength.

While only one documented case of this type of voter fraud has surfaced so far, given the fact that numerous cases have turned up in adjacent counties it is highly likely that YPM, and possibly other organizations with similar goals, has defrauded many other voters without their knowing it. While the RR/CC sends a postcard to every person who registers or re-registers to ensure against just such problems, frequently these postcards are ignored. Fortunately, there is a way to track the activities of voter registration groups. Organizations wishing to register or re-register voters are issued numbered affidavits by the RR/CC. YPM has returned about 9,000 of these affidavits to the RR/CC, including both new registrations and re-registrations. The RR/CC recently wrote to a sample of those voters who had returned YPM-issued affidavits changing their party affiliation to Republican to confirm that the voters actually meant to do so.

Unfortunately, this effort may not be enough. Many voters have heard about this problem through the press or through other political parties and are seeking to verify that their own registrations have not been changed. While it is possible to confirm voter registration including party affiliation over the telephone, telephone lines have been swamped. The RR/CC recently unveiled a new function on their web page which allows voters to quickly and easily confirm their registration status; however this does not include information about party affiliation.

It is critical that the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk act expeditiously and decisively to allay concerns about voter fraud and to ensure voters that they are registered to vote in accordance with their wishes.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk be instructed to expand his review of voter affidavits returned by the political organization known as Young Political Majors, so that every voter who purportedly changed his/her party affiliation to Republican by Young Political Majors is contacted by RR/CC staff to confirm that the change in party affiliation is consistent with that voter's wishes.

ABK Young Political Majors (2)